Rhuddlan Castle

RHUDDLAN lies half way between Prestatyn (5 miles east) and Abergele (5 miles west) on the A 547, and between Rhyl (2½ miles north) and St Asaph (2½ miles south) on the A 525. The castle is easily seen from the road intersection near Rhuddlan Bridge, and there is a car park for visitors. There is a frequent bus service from Rhyl. Ordnance Survey 1:50 000 map 116; 1in map 108; reference SJ 247733.

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Rhuddlan Castle

CLWYD

Castell Rhuddlan

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CRYNODEB

Y Castell cynharaf yn Rhuddlan oedd y mwnt a beili pridd tua'r de o'r Castell presennol, a godwyd ym 1073 gan Robert o Ruddlan, perthynas i Hugh, Iarll Normanaidd Caer. Ym 1277, wrth ddod â'i fyddin yn erbyn y Tywysog Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, adeiladodd y Brenin Edward I y Castell presennol a'r fwrdeistref sy'n gysylltiedig ag ef. Yn ystod yr adeiladu rhwng 1277 a 1283, y pensaer oedd James o St George. Sianelu Afon Clwyd ar hyd ei chwrs presennol oedd y prif waith peirianyddol. Ffurf gonsentrig sydd i'r Castell ei hun a llinell ddwbl o amddiffynfeydd. Amddiffynnir y canol, sydd ar ffurf diemwnt, gan dyrau mewn dau gornel a chan dai porth anferth yn y ddau gornel arall.

History

Early history

RHUDDLAN first appears in recorded history in the last years of the eighth century, when there was no town of Rhyl and the shore road from Prestatyn to Abergele did not exist. Instead, the Clwyd and the marshes of its estuary, now reclaimed and drained and cultivated, formed a natural barrier athwart the coastal approach to the mountainous heart of North Wales. The settlement of Rhuddlan is likely to have owed its origin to the presence at this point, from very early times, of the lowest fording-place on the river, from which a track led on across the marsh to Vaynol and beyond. Its position thus marked it out as a key point in the racial struggles which for some six hundred years (*c.* 700–*c.* 1300) swayed to and fro across the Welsh and English border.

During the reign of Offa of Mercia (757–96) the great dyke which bears his name was constructed, outlining the beginning of the hill country from Prestatyn to the Bristol Channel and defining the westward limit of English settlement. In 796, the year of Offa's death, the English, fighting on beyond the new frontier, won a battle at Rhuddlan, and either as a result of it or of later conquest obtained control of Englefield. This district, the Welsh Tegeingl, preserves in its name the memory of the Deceangli, a Celtic tribe mentioned by the Roman historian Tacitus in the first century of the Christian era. By the time of the coming of the Normans Englefield was restricted to the northern part of the later Flintshire and was dependent on Rhuddlan. Further English operations on the northern frontier are indicated by the death of Offa's successor, Cenwulf, at Basingwerk in 821. The predominantly Welsh place-names to the west of Offa's Dyke suggest, however, that Rhuddlan and its outlying manors were not firmly consolidated under English rule. When we next hear of the place in 1063, it is a royal seat of Gruffydd ap Llywelyn and the base from which that powerful prince plundered the English lands as far east as Oswestry and Wrexham. In that year Gruffydd was driven from Rhuddlan by Earl Harold and his palace burned.

The Norman Conquest

Three years later Harold himself lost the decisive battle of Hastings, and the Welsh had henceforth to contend with the organised might of the most powerful military despotism in Europe. At the command

of William the Conqueror a new castle, of the motte-and-bailey pattern which marked every stage of the Norman penetration, was thrown up at Rhuddlan in 1073 by Robert of Rhuddlan, a kinsman and deputy of Hugh, the Norman Earl of Chester. Even to this day Robert's earthen mound, traditionally occupying the site of Gruffydd ap Llywelyn's palace, rises impressively to the south of its thirteenth-century successor, while the outline of its bailey may still be traced in the adjoining fields. Thus refortified, Rhuddlan became the base for a westward harrying which for a time brought the very mountains of Snowdonia under Robert's mastery. The record of Domesday Book, drawn up in 1086, throws much light on Rhuddlan at this period. Under the joint lordship of Robert and Earl Hugh a small borough was established beside the castle. In 1086 its burgesses, eighteen in number, had both a church and a mint, and enjoyed the special privileges and immunities conferred by the laws and customs of Hereford. Silver coins minted at Rhuddlan from the reign of William the Conqueror (1066–87) to that of Henry III (1216–72) are preserved in the national collections.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries

During the following two centuries the castle and town changed hands many times, as the tide of border warfare favoured first the Welsh and then the English. We know little of the development of the castle buildings during these years. As late as 1241–42 the defences, at least in part, were still of wood, and timber-framed buildings occupied the bailey. There is a record in that year of payments for timber to repair the defects in the wooden works, for making cranes, ladders and other necessary implements, and for carrying old wooden works back to Chester; orders are given at the same time for the construction of a wooden chapel in the castle where divine service may be celebrated. By now the age-old border struggle was about to enter on its last phase, a phase in which Rhuddlan was to assume a new and increased importance. During the reign of Henry III political disunity in England gave Llywelyn ap Gruffydd an opportunity to establish his authority over all the lesser princes of his country. Calling himself Prince of Wales, he won recognition first from the barons' leader Simon de Montfort and in 1267 from Henry himself.

Llywelyn ap Gruffydd and Edward I

Llywelyn's fall, as Sir John Lloyd has written, 'was as spectacular as his rise. Thinking in terms of the Barons' War, he failed to realise the new unity achieved in England under Edward I and directly challenged that monarch's power.' When, in 1274, Edward returned to England from the Crusade, he assumed the crown not merely as one who had already for twenty years been lord in his own right of all Ireland, of the Earldom of Chester, of the King's lands in Wales, of the Duchy of Gascony and of the Channel Islands. He came also as one who had gained first-hand knowledge of the art of war and first-hand acquaintance with a variety of military fortifications in many parts of the Mediterranean and Near East. Such was the experience, administrative and military, of the man whom Llywelyn now defied.

The war of 1277

After two years' forbearance Edward determined in 1276 to obtain Llywelyn's submission by force of arms. The enterprise was timed for the following summer and elaborate preparations made to ensure its success. For the campaign in North Wales supplies of every kind, together with great numbers of fighting men and artisans, were gathered from all parts of England and concentrated at Chester, where the King arrived to take command on 16th July 1277. On 22nd July he went forward to establish an advanced base at Flint, where work was immediately started on the construction of Flint Castle. With naval support provided by the twenty-five ships of the Cinque Ports fleet the army pushed on along the coast, and on or about 22nd August the King moved his headquarters up to Rhuddlan, where we may infer that buildings were still available for use in the old castle. Llywelyn's surrender in the following month brought the war to a successful and perhaps unexpectedly speedy end, though it was not until November that hostilities were formally terminated by the submission of Llywelyn to the King at Rhuddlan.

Planning and design of new castle

Meanwhile, under Edward's direction, work was put in hand on the erection of an entirely new stronghold a little to the north-west of Robert of Rhuddlan's motte-and-bailey. Payments for the new operations begin to be recorded on 14th September 1277 and continue with-

out pause until March 1282. The architect, insofar as an architect in something like the modern sense was employed, was James of St George, who in the 1260s had learned his trade under his father building castles for Edward's kinsmen the Counts of Savoy in what is now western Switzerland and the Department of Isère in eastern France. From one of these, the castle of St Georges-d'Esperanche, between Lyon and Grenoble, he took his name. St George was chief master mason at Rhuddlan and Flint from 1278 to 1283; afterwards, as Master of the King's Works in Wales, he directed the building of Conwy, Caernarfon, Harlech and Beaumaris castles. He also worked for the King in Scotland, notably at Linlithgow. His services were rewarded with a pension and a grant for life of the Flintshire manor of Mostyn.

Building of castle*

Few detailed building accounts for Rhuddlan have come down to us, but summaries recorded on the Pipe Rolls enable us to follow the progress of the work and assess its cost in money and effort. Mention is made early of *fossatores* or ditchers, the navvies and pioneers of their day, excavating the moats round the castle. We know that at Flint, during August 1277, there were at one time as many as 1800 of these ditchers employed, and when work was in full swing at Rhuddlan the figure there is likely to have been at least as large. Many of them came to Wales from far afield—from Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Lancashire, Warwickshire and Leicestershire, and in the case of at least one gang we know that they were pressed men doing forced labour. Masons and carpenters were brought from distant counties too, from Lincoln and Nottingham, Gloucester and Oxford, as well as from Shropshire and Stafford, Leicester and Warwick. In 1278, when work had been in progress a year, the King and Queen came and spent a week at Rhuddlan, and their personal wishes with regard to the royal apartments were no doubt expressed at this time. By 1280 building had sufficiently advanced for the towers to receive their lead roofs, and in 1281 the King's Hall in the castle was being roofed with shingles. It may be no coincidence that building work stopped in the middle of March 1282, at the very time of the attack with which the Welsh opened their new

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*For a fully documented account of the subject-matter of the following paragraphs see *The History of the King's Works* (London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1963) pages 318–27.

campaign against the English positions in North Wales; the fact that it was necessary to repair parts of the castle in 1285 suggests that it may have received damage in the rising. Between 1283 and 1286 large sums were spent on the erection of private apartments, including a chapel, for the Queen. Early in 1283 a quantity of timber and shingles was supplied for building a workshop in the castle for the Queen's goldsmith; another item is 64s paid to Adam the tailor for four pieces of red silk purchased to make pennons and royal standards for the castle.

Medieval town

Beside the castle and beneath its protection Edward I established a

new chartered borough, in which the burgages were let at low fixed rentals to English settlers. The same policy was followed at Edward's new foundations at Flint and Aberystwyth (Llanbadarn Fawr), and boroughs were later similarly established at Conwy, Caernarfon, Criccieth, Harlech, Beaumaris and elsewhere. It was common throughout Western Europe to found such boroughs in association with castles, which thus formed the nuclei of trading communities in time of peace and places of refuge in time of war. At Rhuddlan there was, as we have seen, already an urban settlement founded, perhaps re-founded, by Robert of Rhuddlan before 1086; this lay to the north, east and southeast of the motte-and-bailey castle, on which it was centred. Edward I developed a new site to the north and north-west of the new stone castle, and the streets known today as High Street, Church Street, Castle Street, Parliament Street and Gwindy Street still follow the lines laid down in 1278. They divide the town into five roughly rectangular sections, ranged on either side of the main street leading down to the bridge across the Clwyd, a symmetrical layout characteristic of the planned towns of the period. The whole area was defended on three sides by an artificial bank and ditch, substantial remains of the northern corner of which are still to be seen (see sketch-plan). These protective earthworks were strengthened by a timber palisade; neither at Rhuddlan nor at Flint was there ever a town wall of stone. On the fourth side the river and the steep cliff leading down to it provided a sufficient natural defence. In November 1278 a charter of liberties was granted, giving the burgesses of the new borough the same privileges as those previously enjoyed by the old. The records show that meadows were being enclosed and burgages marked out near the castle early in 1279. Wages were paid throughout 1281 and up to the end of July 1282 to ditchers and carpenters engaged on throwing up the town defences. By the latter year there were barriers at the entrances to the town which could be locked at night, and a barrier on the bridge could be locked also. The work was still in progress in December 1282, when ships were sent from Rhuddlan to Chester to be loaded 'with the timber which the King has caused to be prepared to enclose his town of Rhuddlan.' In accordance with custom the defences of a new town were the responsibility of its founder; indeed, in a land often ravaged by border warfare they were the most effective contribution to the success of the colony. It was for the settlers themselves to erect dwelling houses on the plots allotted to them.

Diversion of River Clwyd

In common with the other castles with which Edward I ringed the Welsh coast from Flint to Aberystwyth, Rhuddlan was so sited that it could be supplied by sea. The English success in the wars of 1277 and 1282 was largely due to the combined operation of land and sea forces, and in the second campaign Rhuddlan took the place of Chester as the principal base for both arms. This was rendered possible by an engineering feat of the first magnitude. In order to provide a deep-water channel from the sea to the castle, a distance of over two miles, the River Clwyd was diverted and canalised. It is for this reason that the river today flows from Rhuddlan to the sea with little deviation, instead of pursuing the serpentine course which would be natural over the alluvial flats of the estuary. The accounts for this work run from November 1277 to November 1280, and it is referred to as the 'great dyke leading from the sea to the castle' (*magnum fossatum qui ducit a mare usque castrum*). The cost, £755 5s 3d, went entirely in the wages of *fossatores*, and, if we take the average daily pay of a *fossator* at $2\frac{1}{2}$d, we find that an average of seventy-seven men, working six days a week continuously throughout the three years, were employed on this work alone. When Beaumaris Castle was building in 1296, the dock beside the Gunners' Walk was designed to accommodate a forty-ton vessel fully laden. No doubt the new channel of the Clwyd allowed sea-going ships of similar draft to pass up the river and berth at Rhuddlan. The Clwyd is tidal to a point just above the town, and indeed, according to the chronicles, Gruffydd ap Llywelyn's ships had anchored in the river at Rhuddlan in 1063. In the intervening two hundred years progressive silting must have diminished its navigability even at high tide, and nothing short of Edward's drastic undertaking could have promised either security to the castle or prosperity to the town.

Rhuddlan Bridge

In the thirteenth century the bridge over the Clwyd was a wooden one; probably it was destroyed or damaged in the war of 1277, for carpenters were working on it early in the following year. It is likely that at this period a section of the bridge could be raised or swung aside to allow the passage of sailing ships to the castle. A considerable sum was spent on rebuilding the bridge in 1334-35, but it remained a timber

structure, and twenty years later it was again in danger of collapse. In 1358 it was rebuilt in stone, and repairs of some importance are recorded in 1372 and 1382. Work of these years may have been retained when the bridge was remodelled in 1595. The town quay was below the bridge, south of the church; it continued to be used by coastal shipping until the nineteenth century, but with the coming of the railway Rhuddlan's waterborne trade soon declined.

Cost of Edward I's works

The surviving accounts, which may not be quite complete, show that the whole of the building works at Rhuddlan from September 1277 to August 1282, including the castle, the town defences, the bridge, and the great river dyke, cost £9613 2s 8¾d. Of this figure £6940 17s 5d is accountable to wages, the remainder to carriage and materials. Of the wages, the sum of £3433 19s 7d was paid to masons, stonecutters and their assistants, whose average payment was 3d a day or 18d a week. In terms of modern money Rhuddlan Castle and borough and the improvement of their link with the sea cost well over £1 000 000; various factors which influence any comparison between medieval and modern figures tend to make this a conservative estimate.

Rhuddlan and the See of St Asaph

Even this was not all that Edward I was prepared to spend to further Rhuddlan's standing and importance. In 1281 application was made to Rome for sanction to transfer to the newly founded borough the neighbouring see of St Asaph. Claiming that he had made Rhuddlan incomparably the finest and best-protected town in the diocese and that a multitude of English settlers were already thronging to it, the King said he was willing to lay out whatever money and labour might be needed to move the whole cathedral establishment from its solitary and rural setting at St Asaph to this new and thriving centre. He offered a suitable site and 1000 marks towards building the new cathedral, but the proposal came to nothing. Had it been realised, Rhuddlan would have become a cathedral city, with other great buildings to engage the visitor's attention besides the castle.

Dominican Friary

Of Rhuddlan Friary, a house of Dominican or Black Friars, practically nothing remains standing. Founded in or before 1258 on land which was within the bounds of the old town, the layout of Edward's new borough left it, contrary to the usual practice of the Preaching Orders, isolated from the area of urban settlement. Today the site of the cloister garth is occupied by the farmyard of Plas-newydd, and a fragment of the south cloister range is incorporated in the farm buildings. No part of the church is left above ground, and little is known about it; it was probably still unfinished when Edward came to Rhuddlan in 1277, for in August of that year he gave the Friars 50s 'to glaze the windows of their church near to the altar of the blessed Virgin'. Other royal benefactions at this time included a gift to the Friars of the then substantial sum of £10 and a contribution to the building of an almshouse or hospital in Rhuddlan for the poor and infirm. In 1284 Queen Eleanor

tarians' Commander-in-Chief and Vice-Admiral in North Wales. Thereafter the House of Commons voted that the castle, with others in Flintshire, should be made untenable, and in May 1648 Roger Hanmer, High Sheriff of the county, was charged with the 'care of the demolishment'. The building's present condition of ruin dates from this year, and John Taylor, the Water Poet, who visited it in 1652, found it a 'wind and war-shaken castle'. In the succeeding three hundred years it has served as a ready quarry for building material, and time and decay have wrought upon it unchecked. In 1944 the owner, the late Admiral Rowley-Conwy, whose family's connection with Rhuddlan goes back at least to that Henry de Conwy who was constable of the castle at the beginning of the fifteenth century, granted guardianship of the ruins and of the Twthill to the then Ministry of Works under the provisions of the Ancient Monuments Acts. Work on the systematic conservation of the remains began in 1947. Since then the moats have been cleared of accumulated debris, the courtyards restored to their original levels, and the walls and towers freed from vegetation and where necessary repaired and strengthened.

Description

THE NORMAN BOROUGH AND ITS DEFENCES

The Norman motte-and-bailey castle

IT will be clear from the foregoing history that at Rhuddlan we have the remains of two castles and two defended towns. The centre of the earlier site, developed in or about the year 1073, is the great mound rising sixty feet above the margin of the Clwyd and now generally known as the Twthill. The mound is formed by the artificial scarping and heightening of a natural hill of boulder clay. The sandy nature of the soil has led in the course of over nine centuries to considerable erosion of the surface and silting of the surrounding ditch, the original depth and defensive value of which cannot now be easily appreciated. When first raised, the earthwork carried on its summit a wooden tower. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries such towers were often replaced in stone, and traces of mortar in the exposed face of the mound suggest that this may have happened at Rhuddlan. To the north lay a bailey or courtyard, a more or less level area defended, like the mound itself, with a surrounding bank and ditch and timber palisade. The outline of part of these defences can still be traced, but long cultivation and sandy soil have combined to obliterate their original character. Within the bailey lay the subsidiary buildings of the castle; they were of timber and, as we have seen, were being renewed in that material as late as 1242.

Norman town defences

The Norman town lay to the north, east and south-east of the Twthill. Its western boundary was formed by the cliff which, above and below the Norman castle, sloped steeply down to the edge of the great marsh. On the east, where there is no natural defence, the area was enclosed by an artificial bank and ditch, some 700 yards in length; at its southern end this turned in a westerly direction to link up with the cliffs fringing the river. Substantial remains of both lengths of ditch may still be seen, that on the east, though much overgrown, being especially well preserved. As a result of modern housing developments it is no longer possible to follow the northern boundary. This must, however, have been similar to those on the east and south. There is reason to believe that it ran parallel to and immediately south of the present Rhuddlan–Dyserth road, and that the ditch merged into the natural dingle to the north of the Edwardian castle. The area thus enclosed was large, but the Domesday account shows that the Normans regarded Rhuddlan as

a place of importance. The streets of the town were laid out on a rectangular pattern; only one of them, the road to the Friary, has continued in use until modern times, but some of the neighbouring field boundaries may follow ancient street lines. It is likely that the old crossing of the river, the *raison d'être* of the original settlement, lay within this area, and that the Norman castle was sited so as to command it.

THE EDWARDIAN BOROUGH AND CASTLE

Edwardian borough

The Edwardian borough, the plan of which has been referred to above, was laid out on a new site immediately to the north-west of its predecessor, with the new castle occupying the north-west corner of the old town. Rhuddlan at the present day is essentially the town as planned by Edward I, though there has been some expansion towards the north-east and in recent years there has been a tendency for buildings to spread south and south-east in the direction of the pre-Edwardian settlement.

Plan of castle

The castle is designed on what is generally known as the concentric plan. That is to say that round the heart of the building, which is the inner ward with its enclosing ring of curtain walls and angle towers, there is an outer defensive ring running parallel to the main walls and itself forming the enclosure of an outer ward which surrounds the inner on all sides. The walls of this outer ring, now almost entirely demolished, were of no great height, allowing the archers and cross-bowmen on the inner wall-tops to discharge their weapons over the heads of the outer defenders. The outer ward, which on the south-west slopes down to the Clwyd, is ringed from one end of the water-front to the other by a wide moat. Its lower section was open to the river and may have served as the castle dock; the upper section, embracing the castle on three sides, was dry, and closed at either end by massive cross walls. The sides of the moat were revetted in stone throughout. The steeply-sloping outward wall, from which the upper face stones have been robbed away, was surmounted by a timber *peel* or palisade. The inward wall rose to carry the curtain of the outer ward and was strengthened with a series of buttresses and turrets. The turrets contain flights of

steps which at first led down to sally-ports into the moat, but three of these were afterwards blocked and the steps filled in. At approximately every fourteen feet of its length the inward wall was pierced by a down-sloping arrow slit, which alternated with other loops at a higher level to give 'fire' cover round the whole circuit of the moat. The position of some fifty of the slits can still be traced, though only three near the north corner survive in any state of completeness. When the castle was first built, the river, newly canalised, washed its western boundary. The meadow which now comes between castle and river results from the gradual scouring of the left and silting of the right bank; in this way it corresponds to the Roodee which in the course of centuries has been formed by the same processes beneath the walls of Chester.

Entrances to castle

The present entrance to the castle at the northern corner of the moat is modern. The original approach from the town probably followed the sloping spur of land which projects southwards near the junction of Castle Street and Cross Street (see sketch-plan). From this spur a wooden bridge spanned the bottom of the castle dingle, and the way led up to a gate, the foundations and lower courses of which are still to be seen beside the north-west end of the moat, and through which visitors now cross into the outer ward.

Town Gate

This, the Town Gate, was one of four original entrances to the castle. As first designed, it was protected by a turning-bridge, and the chases, now blocked, in which the counterpoise weights of the bridge moved, are still visible. The solidity and finished appearance of the blocking suggests that it is of early date, and probably points to the abandonment of the turning-bridge not long after the building of the castle. The pitched stone track leading up to the West Gatehouse and through it into the inner ward is an original feature brought to light by excavation.

Friary Gate

A second gate, approached from the direction of the Blackfriars and therefore called the Friary Gate, stood at the opposite end of the upper section of the moat, which was originally crossed at this point by a causeway. This entrance was given up within twenty years of the

completion of the castle. The accounts show that between the years 1300 and 1302 the causeway was removed, the gate blocked up and a new turret erected in its place. The lower courses of the original gatehouse and of the jambs of the gateway were cleared of fallen debris in 1948 and are now exposed to view; here also may be seen the chases for the counterpoise weights of the original turning-bridge, filled in when the bridge went out of use in 1300.

River Gate

Access to the castle from the river was given by a third entry; referred to in the records as the 'postern' or 'gate towards the Clwyd', it may be conveniently named the River Gate. It projected towards the river from a corner of the massive retaining wall built as a revetment to the north-west angle of the outer ward. It appears from a print of 1742 that it was still standing at that time, but today its position is only marked by an agglomeration of fallen masonry and a rebate and two draw-bar holes in the adjacent wall. A weakness developed at this point, no doubt as a result of flood action, very soon after the building of the castle, and part of the retaining wall appears to have collapsed. In 1303 Thomas of Caerwys, mason, contracted with the constable of the castle to repair the stone wall facing the Clwyd, near the postern, as it was 'partly destroyed and threatened great ruin'. The repairs carried out at this time have left a number of straight joints in the masonry, showing where new retaining walls were added against the original structure.

Dock Gate

One further postern, of which the threshold and lower jambs remain, led into the south-west corner of the outer ward from the lowest section of the moat. This may be called the Dock Gate, for at first the river flowed into the moat inlet at high tide, allowing a vessel to berth here under the protection of the adjoining tower.

Gillot's Tower

This tower is probably the one mentioned in early fourteenth-century records as Gillot's Tower. At this period castle towers were sometimes named after the mason-contractor who built them, and here we may perhaps have evidence that Gillot de Chalons, a mason who was working at Conwy in 1286, had been previously employed at Rhuddlan.

The tower is a four-storey structure projecting from the south-west corner of the outer ward. Its entrance was on the third storey, being reached by a flight of steps (now destroyed) from the wall-walk which, at this point at any rate, surmounted the outer curtain. Now, however, there is ready access at the next level below, where the window openings have been greatly enlarged by the destruction of their dressed stonework. Both this floor and the unlighted basement beneath it could originally only be reached by ladder stairs leading down from within the room above. From this level stone steps against the wall also lead up to the top floor, the supporting corbels of which remain in position. This uppermost room has a corner fireplace and a single small window looking towards the castle. The two windows in the room below, one looking up the Clwyd and the other across the marsh, are almost the only ones in the building which retain their dressed stonework intact inside and out. They have narrow-splayed embrasures with the simplest form of shouldered lintel; the openings are of unusual type, having a small square upper light separated by a transom

from a narrow loop below. Another example of the same type survives in the north tower of the East Gatehouse.

River wall

Northwards from Gillot's Tower runs a well-preserved stretch of low curtain wall, with much of the wall-walk and parapet remaining above a row of arrow slits. Undermining caused by flooding has led to the subsidence of the northern part of this wall, while between here and the site of the River Gate it has collapsed altogether.

Buildings and outer ward

Today the outer ward is devoid of buildings and, apart from foundations exposed near the north-west corner, no trace remains of the structures that originally stood in it. These included the granary, the great and little stables, the forge (in which, in 1300, iron was forged for use in siegeworks in the Scottish wars), the treasury, a workshop for the Queen's goldsmith and, no doubt, many more of the ancillary buildings necessary to the life of any great medieval establishment. Most, probably all, of them were timber-framed structures with thatched or shingled roofs. Here also, in their wooden shelters, stood the 'engines', the artillery of their day, which provided the castle's heavier defence. One of them faced the Clwyd; a tower described as 'near the small engine' is perhaps that of which the base survives at the extreme north-west corner of the ward. In 1303 the round stones required for the engines' ammunition were obtained from Gwespyr and fashioned on the spot by a Derbyshire mason, Robert of Melbourne.

Inner ward

The plan of the inner ward is approximately that of a square set diagonally to the points of the compass. At the eastern and western angles are twin-towered gatehouses, almost but not quite directly opposite to each other, while single towers project from the northern and southern angles. The four corners of the ward are mitred off where the curtain walls make junction with the gatehouses and angle towers, without impairing the essential squareness of the plan. The same feature may be noted at Flint, Conwy, Harlech and Beaumaris. Except for breaches in the north-east and north-west walls, all four curtains are intact and survive to the height of the wall-walks, which originally made a continuous circuit of the ward; only the battlemented parapets are lacking—though even of these a single fragment remains where the north-east curtain joins the North Tower. Each curtain was surmounted near its centre by a small narrow turret or box machicolation, projected outwards on corbels to give added protection against assault at the most vulnerable point, i.e. mid-way between the towers. No part of the turrets remains, but the position of those on the south-west and south-east sides can be clearly seen. Similar provision is known to have been made on the seaward curtain at Harlech. The towers rise a stage higher than the curtains. Those to the south and west remain to their full height, wanting only their battlements, but the northern and eastern towers have sustained considerable damage. For the greater part of their length the curtain walls are built to a thickness of nine feet. Where they join the towers this is widened to eleven feet, the extra thickness accommodating garderobes at the ground and intermediate stages, while at the stage above narrow flights of steps lead up to the wall-walk from the top of the wide circular staircase with which each of the towers is provided. All the towers were exactly similar in plan, with four rooms in each; in addition the south tower has a basement. Symmetry and uniformity are the keynotes of the whole design, and are present in a degree not seen in military fortifications in these islands since Roman times. Three of the four curtains are pierced at ground level by four narrow slits set in wide embrasures, while doorways in the northern and southern corners lead to four garderobes, one on either side of each angle tower. Only at one point is the symmetry broken: near the northern tower a door leading from the inner to the outer ward is substituted for one of the four embrasures in the north-west curtain. This was probably to enable supplies to be brought in without the necessity of raising the portcullis or opening the great doors in either of the main gate passages, and may indicate that the kitchen stood nearby on this side of the ward.

East Gatehouse

At the ground stage the East Gatehouse is the better preserved of the two. It consists of a central gate passage, the outer half of which is flanked by twin three-quarter round towers and the inner by newel staircases which project towards it from the fourth quarter of each tower. The passage was closed near the centre by a portcullis and gate,

the chases and draw-bar holes for which may still be seen. The approach as well as the outer part of the passage itself was covered by two loop-holes in each of the flanking towers, in both of which guardrooms or porters' rooms occupied the ground floor. Two other loopholes in each room gave 'fire' cover along the adjacent curtain and outwards towards the moat. All the surviving loopholes in the curtains and towers of the inner ward were rebated for external wooden shutters, the rebates in the East Gatehouse passage being especially well preserved. In the southern room the two inner loopholes have been blocked up and their embrasures filled in, to allow the construction in front of them of a large fireplace, while the wall between them has been hacked back to form the flue. These alterations were made in 1303, when payment is recorded 'for making a chimney in the house of the gatekeeper for averting the danger of fire'. Access to the guardrooms as well as to the staircases was by narrow passages parallel to the main entrance. The ends of these passages are now open to the courtyard. Originally, how-ever, they were enclosed, as were the ends of the similar passages above them, in a structure which backed the gatehouse proper and connected with ranges of buildings running along the sides of the courtyard. This rear building contained a prolongation of the central passage which probably terminated in an inner gate to the courtyard and from which short transverse passages led through to those at the sides. Its complete disappearance shows that like the adjoining buildings it was mainly of timber, whereas the corresponding rear buildings in the more-elaborate gatehouses of the later North Wales castles matched the solidity of the frontal towers. At Rhuddlan the frontal towers of the East Gatehouse have largely perished; so much as remains, however, shows that their internal arrangements duplicated almost exactly those of the West Gatehouse towers, the upper storeys of which are practically intact.

West Gatehouse

Most of the face stone, and much of the core of the lower walls of the West Gatehouse has been robbed, and a comparison with the ground floor of the East Gatehouse will help the visitor to visualise the original layout. Here, too, there was formerly a rear building projecting into the courtyard at the back of the main structure. The twin gate towers are of four storeys. Above the ground-floor rooms, which were circular, were three heptagonal rooms, the levels of which are shown by
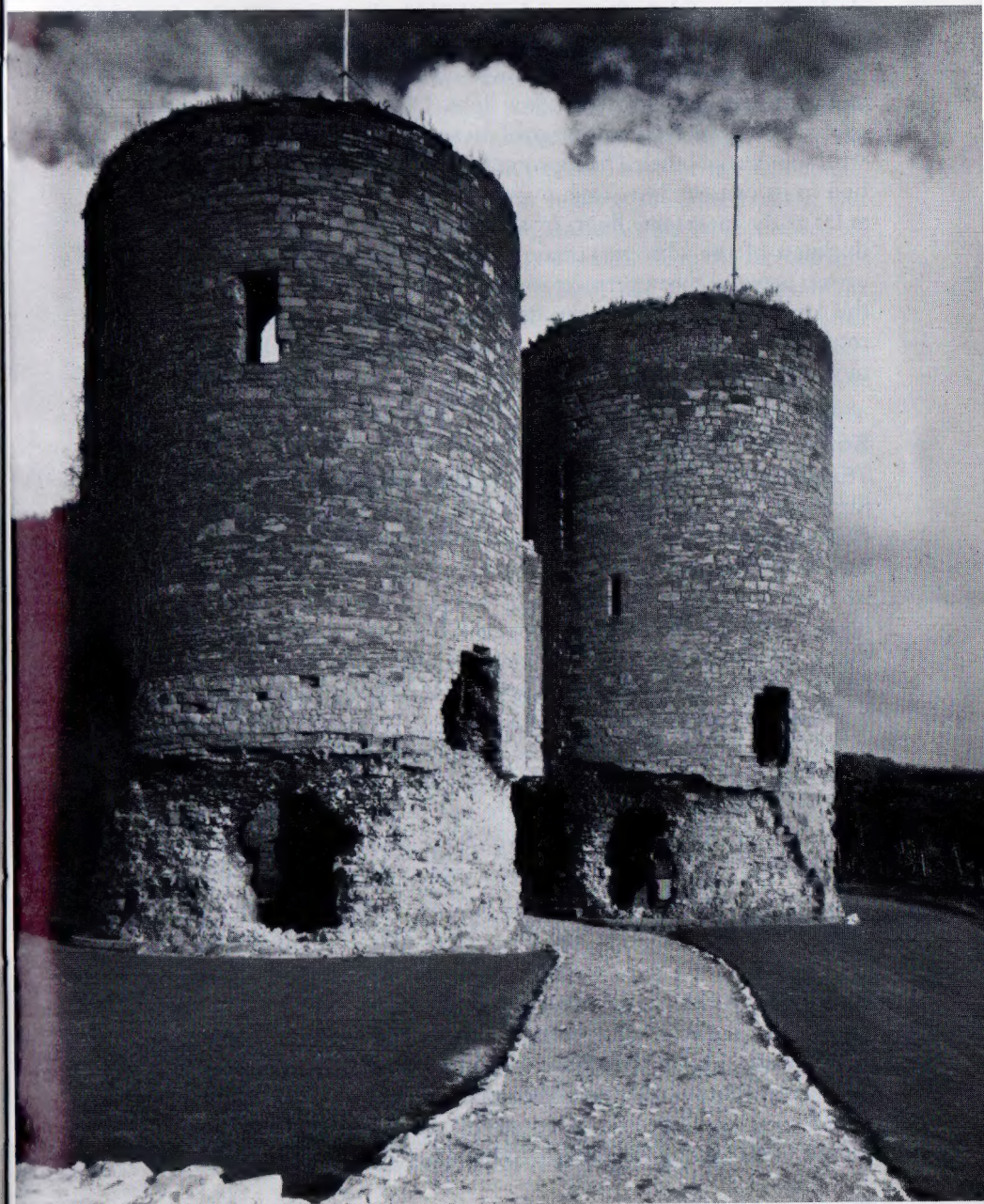
the beamholes of their floors, and of which the lowest, with a fireplace and two windows, was the principal apartment. The third floor was a mezzanine, not so lofty as those above and below it, without a fireplace and with only one narrow window light. The window in the northern room at this level retains its original dressed stone jambs and embrasure with shouldered lintel. The topmost floor of all had a fireplace in addition to its one window. Each tower was served by a wide newel stair as far as the mezzanine floor, from which a short flight of steps in the thickness of the adjacent curtain led up to the wall-walk. In all six towers access to the uppermost room was from the wall-walk and from this level curving stairs in the thickness of the wall led to the tower roofs. Above the roof line there are circular parapets originally surmounted by battlements.

South and North Towers

The single towers at the other two angles were entered directly from the short cross walls which cut the corners of the courtyard, the staircase being on the left-hand side of the entrance in each case. In the South Tower the disposition and shape of the successive rooms repeats, floor by floor, the arrangements already noted in the towers of the gatehouses, with the addition of a basement. Like the ground-floor room this is circular; it contains no windows and could only be entered through a trapdoor in the floor above. In the North Tower the design is varied, in that the ground-floor room is partly above and partly below courtyard level. Having no natural lighting, it was in effect a basement, but it was entered by steps leading directly down from the courtyard, not by a trapdoor as in the case of the true basement in the South Tower. Another respect in which the North Tower differs from all the others is that its mezzanine floor was circular instead of straight-sided. The steps leading up from this level to the wall-walk can be seen from below. The top floor, as in the South Tower, was hexagonal.

Buildings in the inner ward

Within the enclosure of the inner ward stood the principal apartments of the castle. The tower rooms accommodated officials and members of the royal households, and no doubt one of the gatehouses contained the residence of the constable, who was the chief officer of the castle and head of its garrison. Within the courtyard there were the

King's Hall and Chamber, the Queen's Hall and Chamber, the kitchens and the chapel. Traces of some of these buildings are still to be seen in beamholes and the lines of roof-creasings cut into the curtains, and in some slight foundations of sleeper walls. The buildings on the north-east and north-west sides were evidently large, and it may be that the two halls were here, flanking a central kitchen near the northern angle, and with their respective chambers or solars at the ends near the East and West Gatehouses. Such an arrangement would have allowed all the buildings in question a south light. It is clear from the records that the interior structures were timber-framed, and their roofs—unlike those of the towers, which were of lead—were of shingles. If the visitor can imagine a courtyard made rather smaller by a range of buildings along each side, and can picture them with the familiar black-and-white half-timbered façades of the Cheshire halls, he will not be far wrong. The main apartments were on the first floor, supported by timber stanchions which probably formed an open colonnade below; thus we read in 1303 of the purchase of new posts and sole plates for putting under the hall. There is a well, some fifty feet deep, near the centre of the courtyard.

Building stone

Four kinds of building stone are used.* The lower courses of the towers and curtains of the inner ward are faced with large squared blocks of dark purple sandstone, which came from a quarry at Pont yr allt goch, two miles SSW of St Asaph. In 1277 and 1278 payments were made to Richard, Canon of St Asaph, for stone bought from him for the construction of the castle, and blocks of this same purple sandstone can be seen in the lower nave walls of St Asaph Cathedral. Another sandstone, of a lighter red colour, is employed for window frames, and for embrasures in the inner ward; this is a Cheshire stone, probably brought to Rhuddlan by water. For the upper parts of the towers, use is made of a yellowish sandstone from the neighbourhood of Flint. In places this is interspersed with a grey carboniferous limestone which is also the material principally used for the curtain walls and for the whole of the moat revetment. There are two nearby sources from which this stone may have come: Dyserth, two miles to the east,

*For a fuller account, see E. Neaverson, *Medieval Castles in North Wales: a Study of Sites, Water Supply and Building Stones*, Liverpool University Press, 1947.

and Vaynol (Bodelwyddan), two miles south-west. In November 1277 stone and lime for the construction of the castle were obtained from the Friars Preachers, perhaps a diversion of materials assembled for their own Friary buildings.

Summary of dates

c. 785	Construction of Offa's Dyke, marking first effective English-Welsh frontier.
796	English victory over Welsh near Rhuddlan.
1063	Gruffydd ap Llywelyn's settlement at Rhuddlan destroyed by Earl Harold.
1066	Battle of Hastings: Norman victory over English.
1073	Construction of motte-and-bailey castle (Twthill) by Norman lord, Robert of Rhuddlan.
1075	Gruffyd ap Cynan captures bailey of Robert's castle but fails to take the mound.
c. 1150	Rhuddlan captured by Owain Gwynedd.
1157	Rhuddlan recaptured by the English.
1167	Rhuddlan recaptured by Owain Gwynedd after three months' siege.
1241	Rhuddlan captured by English under Henry III.
1254	Grant to Edward, the King's son, of Ireland, the Earldom of Chester (including Rhuddlan and the future Flintshire), the King's lands in Wales, the Channel Islands and Gascony.
1267	Treaty of Montgomery: Llywelyn ap Gruffyd receives Rhuddlan and the four border cantreds (northern part of future Flintshire and Denbighshire).
1270–1274	Edward absent on Crusade; succeeds to English crown as Edward I in November 1272.
1277	Edward I's first Welsh war; Llywelyn surrenders at Rhuddlan.
1277–1282	Construction of Rhuddlan castle and new town.
1277–1280	Work in progress on diversion and deepening of River Clwyd.
1282–1283	Edward I's second Welsh war; death of Llywelyn.
1284	Statute of Wales promulgated at Rhuddlan.
1400–1410	Rising of Owain Glyndŵr.
1536	Act of Union: Welsh shires represented in English Parliament.
1646	Civil War: Rhuddlan Castle surrendered to Parliamentary forces.
1648	Castle rendered untenable.
1947	Work of conservation begun.

CONVERSION TABLE

1ft	0.3m	30yd	27.4m
5ft	1.5m	35yd	32.0m
10ft	3.0m	40yd	36.6m
15ft	4.6m	45yd	41.1m
20ft	6.1m	50yd	45.7m
25ft	7.6m	100yd	91.4m
30ft	9.1m	200yd	182.9m
35ft	10.7m	300yd	274.3m
40ft	12.2m	400yd	365.8m
45ft	13.7m	500yd	457.2m
50ft	15.2m	1000yd	914.4m
100ft	30.5m		
		1 acre	0.40ha
1yd	0.9m	5 acres	2.02ha
5yd	4.6m	10 acres	4.05ha
10yd	9.1m		
15yd	13.7m	1 mile	1.60km
20yd	18.3m	5 miles	8.04km
25yd	22.9m	10 miles	16.09km

CASTLE STREET

CASTLE DINGLE

MOAT

MOAT

OUTER

WARD

MOAT

MOAT

NORTH TOWER

EAST GATEHOUSE

FIREPLACE

INNER WARD

WELL

WEST GATEHOUSE

TOWN GATE

SOUTH TOWER

TURRET ON SITE OF FRIARY GATE

SITE OF CAUSEWAY

RIVER GATE

RIVER WALL

DOCK GATE

MOAT

SPRING

■ 1277~1282
▨ 1300~1302

10 5 0   10 20 30 40 50 60 70
SCALE OF FEET
5   0   5   10   15   20
SCALE OF METRES

RHUDDLAN CASTLE